



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Ways Citizens Can Contribute to Conservation of Wild Birds



*Catch the  
Migration  
Sensation*

*International  
Migratory Bird  
Day is May 8th*

### **Watch What You Spray**

Each year 4 million tons of pesticides are applied in the United States exposing 672 million birds to the harmful effects of these chemicals. Even when some store-bought pesticides are applied according to label directions, migratory birds can die. Before using pesticides consider the following:

*Exercise Prevention First.* Drain away standing water in your yard; don't stack wood directly on the ground and move it away from your house; and don't let your lawn go long periods without watering.

*Try Attacking Pests with a Combination of Methods.* Try hoeing instead of spraying to get rid of weeds; use compost as a fertilizer; use only native plants; rotate vegetables in your garden from year to year.

*Use Low Impact Pesticides.* Use the most specific chemical pesticide for your need. Always follow label instructions; applying more than is recommended isn't necessarily better.

*Get a Good Book on Pesticides.* Many books on pesticides and gardening can be found at neighborhood bookstores and libraries. Contact your county agricultural extension agent with any questions.

*For more information on pesticides and birds see Pesticide Fact Sheet or call Mary Henry, USFWS, 703/358-2148.*

### **Create Backyard Habitat**

Creating backyard habitat is something nearly everyone can do.

*Food:* Provide plenty of natural bird food by planting native plants that bear small berries or that support ample insect populations. A bird feeder is also useful for attracting many birds.

*Shelter:* Birds require dense cover, like shrubs and evergreen trees, especially during winter.

*Water:* Commercial bird baths, small pools, and natural ponds are surefire ways to attract birds.

*Nest Sites:* Put up a bird house for hole-nesting birds like chickadees and wrens.

*Watch Your Spraying:* Spraying pesticides can lower the quality of otherwise great bird habitat. Minimize their use.

### **Be a Responsible Cat Owner**

■ Keep only as many cats as you can care for.

■ Keep your cat indoors whenever possible.

■ Consider spaying or neutering your cat.

■ If you don't want your cat anymore, do not release it into rural areas. Contact your local animal shelter or welfare organization instead.

■ Locate bird feeders away from heavy cover so that cats cannot surprise unsuspecting birds. Position feeders to avoid deadly window collisions.

### **Buy Shade-Grown Coffee**

Coffee is a tropical crop, and much of the coffee we drink is grown in the West Indies, southern Mexico, and Central and South America. Bird-friendly coffee is grown in the shade, under a natural canopy of tropical trees. In the midst of shrinking and altered habitat, both in North and Latin America, migratory birds have found a sanctuary in the forest-like environment of traditional coffee plantations which support over 150 species of birds—a number exceeded only in undisturbed tropical forest.

New varieties of coffee have been developed in the past twenty years which are sun tolerant and are grown with no shade canopy at all. Sun coffee production not only causes agronomic risks but also contributes to a major habitat change for migratory birds. Studies have found that the diversity of migratory birds plummets when coffee is converted from shade to sun. Avifauna studies in Colombia and Mexico found 94 percent to 97 percent fewer bird species in sun-grown coffee than in shade-grown coffee. When purchasing coffee, check the label or ask your grocer for certified shade-status coffee.

### **Buy a Duck Stamp**

One of the easiest and most effective things anyone can do for birds is to purchase a Migratory Bird Conservation Stamp, commonly known as the "Duck Stamp," available for \$15 from post offices, sporting goods stores, K-Marts, Wal-Marts, and national wildlife refuges around the country. Ninety-eight cents of every dollar raised by Duck Stamp sales is used to buy wetland habitat, which benefits migratory waterfowl and a host of other species of birds and wildlife.

*Call the new USFWS toll free number 1-888/534-0400 to order a Federal Duck Stamp or for more information.*

### **Get Involved In Community Planning**

Listen to what your county commissioners or land use planners are saying about future use and zoning of lands in your area. Make sure those plans are in the best interest of wildlife, as well as other types of community development—remember "green space"

raises *all* property values. Community decision-makers are usually receptive to input from citizens, especially if you have a good understanding of the issues.

### **Join a Bird or Garden Club**

A good way to become more informed about birds is to join a bird club, garden club or other citizens' group. Simple interaction with a diversity of other people who share your basic interests is likely to create a more informed viewpoint about bird conservation.

### **Volunteer at a Refuge or Park**

One of the most significant actions anyone can take is to volunteer at a national wildlife refuge, state park or other wildlife sanctuary. You may be able to help with litter control, trail maintenance, guiding tours for civic groups, developing a bird or tree list, or starting a nestbox program. Few refuges would turn down an offer of some additional help.

Join or start a "Friends" group at your nearest national wildlife refuge or park. These groups provide a consistent source of volunteer support. The help you provide can make a real contribution to the future of wild birds.

*For other information about "Friends" groups in your area, contact Allyson Rowell, USFWS, 703/358-1744.*

### **Start an Annual Bird Festival or IMBD Event**

This is a good way to generate community spirit, ensure a better environment, and raise awareness about and promote the conservation of migratory birds and the habitats they need to survive.

■ The IMBD's Organizer's Packet is full of "how to" information on hosting a birding festival.

■ Teachers can obtain the IMBD Educator's Packet filled with fun and innovative activities for elementary and middle school kids.

■ Obtain posters, T-shirts, pins, patches, and other IMBD merchandise through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 1120 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20036 (202/857-0166).

*To receive an IMBD announcement packet, call 703/358-2318 or write USFWS, Office of Migratory Bird Management, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 634, Arlington, Virginia 22203 or e-mail: [IMBD@fws.gov](mailto:IMBD@fws.gov). For more information visit the IMBD website at [www.americanbirding.org](http://www.americanbirding.org)*

### **Donate Your Old Binoculars**

Give new life to your old binoculars by passing them on to new birding enthusiasts. If your old binoculars are in good condition or only need a little work, they can be refurbished and given to a budding birdwatcher. Send used binoculars to the Fairfax Audubon Society, P.O. Box 82, Vienna, Virginia 22183.